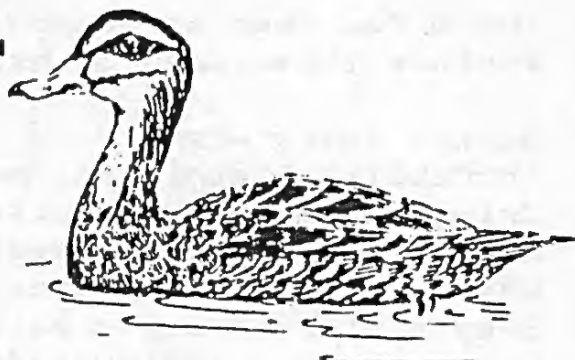


CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

JULY 1991

#169



Black duck.

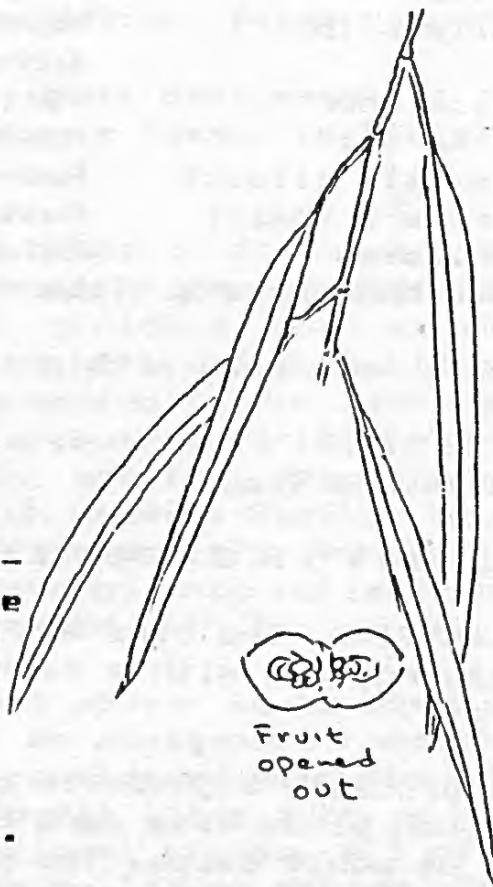
WEeping PITTOSPORUM

Weeping pittosporum (or *Pittosporum phylliraeoides*) was one of the interesting finds made during the Club's survey of the roads in Maldon Shire.

Weeping pittosporum can be found growing along Lakey's Road (sometimes called Boundary Road), about 1.5 km north of Bell's Swamp. It can be reached by taking the sealed road that leads north from Bell's Swamp. The patch of pittosporum is in Lakey's Road, close to the corner. Plants can be found on both sides of the road.

Weeping pittosporum is fairly common in the Mallee areas.

Beauglehole, in "The distribution of Vascular Plants in the North Central Area, Victoria" gives its distribution in the north-central area to be in the Inglewood-Wedderburn region, and in the northern part of the Bendigo Whipstick.



Weeping pittosporum grows to small tree size with graceful, drooping branches. The capsules are showy. About a centimetre long, they become orange and open to show sticky red seeds. Because of the colour of the fruit, the plant is sometimes called wild apricot.

The name pittosporum refers to the sticky pulp around the seeds (pittos = pitch and sporus = seed). *Phylliraeoides* refers to the resemblance of one of the genus to a member of the olive family.

It makes a good garden plant, and is ideally suited to a hot dry position.

SANDON BIRD HAPPENINGS

The birds seen at Sandon for May 1991 by Susanna Starr include these seen drinking at the bird bath.

Superb fairy wrens

Thornbills - striated, brown, buff-rumped, yellow

Crimson rosellas - adults in pairs and juvenile in flocks

Robins - scarlet and eastern yellow - pairs

White-throated tree-creeper

Grey shrike-thrush - pair

Honeyeaters - yellow-tufted (pairs), white-eared (lone), white-naped (flock) with brown-headed, white-plumed (pairs), yellow-faced (pairs), fuscous (lone).

Grey fantail

Silvereyes.

Other birds seen on the property include

Willy wagtail

Golden whistler

Welcome swallows (pair)

Magpies

Restless flycatcher

Crested shrike-tit

Diamond firetails (flock)

Speckled warblers (pair)

Spotted pardalotes

Yellow tufted honeyeaters (abundant flocks)

Eastern rosellas

Red wattlebirds (pair)

White-winged choughs

Kookaburra

Varied sittellas

Masked lapwings (pair)

Red-browed firetails

Australasian Grebe

Galahs

As well, these were seen within a kilometre

Maned duck (2 pairs)

Brown treecreeper

Common bronzewings (four)

FOR IDENTIFICATION

JUVENILE BLACKBIRD. The bird was described as being like a male blackbird, but with a dark beak. Location was at McKenzies Hill.

The bird is probably a juvenile or sub-mature male blackbird. Such birds have dark beaks rather than the yellow beak of adult males. The plumage of the juveniles are usually not as dark, and darken as the bird matures.

The other black-coloured birds in the district are the Little and Australian ravens. They are much bigger than the blackbird. The chough and pied currawong are also much larger than the blackbird and have white patches visible in flight.

EUCALYPTS AT DARGILE. What are the large bushy eucalypts near the picnic ground at Dargile?

These are tallowwoods (or *Eucalyptus microcorys*). Tallowwoods are native to the northern N.S.W. and southern

Queensland coast and coastal ranges. Unusually, for a eucalypt, it grows with other eucalypt species (such as Sydney blue gum) and also as an overstory species in rain forests.

The name "tallowwood" is given because of the smooth greasy finish to the wood, making it ideal for dance floors. It is considered by many to be the best hardwood in the State of New South Wales.



EP.

SAVING LEADBEATER'S POSSUM

Following receipt of "The Draft Management Policy for the Conservation of Leadbeater's Possum in Victoria), the Club has made the following submission. Thanks to Beris Perry for her research and preparation of the response.

"Having read and discussed the Draft Management Strategy for the Conservation of Leadbeater's Possum in Victoria, we have two major reservations.

1. Results of the most recent research do not appear to have been given sufficient consideration. Unlogged areas, listed as valuable habitat and corridors, such as steep rocky ridges and stream reserves, are not suitable or preferred habitat, and as information is not available on the minimum width of corridors required for their desired use, especially by less dominant species, they are of doubtful value. Many areas which provide habitat at present will deteriorate as the balance of old and regrowth changes, so areas which will develop into suitable habitat need to be preserved and managed.

2. Equal representation does not appear to be given to members of conservation groups on management committees. They are in the minority when considered with the total number of representatives of forest users such as wood interests, sporting and recreational groups, all of whom exploit the forest to a greater or lesser degree. Representatives from the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Division, researchers and biologists should comprise 50% of members on decision making and management committees with power to monitor closely at regional levels, where ultimately the success or failure of the Strategies is decided."

NOTES FOR JUNE

SILVER GULL AT POST OFFICE CORNER. After the excursion on June 15th to Smith's Reef was called off because of the weather, a solitary silver gull was seen at the post office corner. The Club's bird list gives previous records for Cairn Curran, Harcourt North, Bell's Swamp and Castlemaine sewerage works. (EP)

BOOBOOK OWL has again been seen in the peppercorn tree in Campbell Street on a number of occasions. (BM)

SCALY THRUSH has been seen in the Smith's Reef forest. This is a new locality record. (GB)

TAWNY FROGMOUTH has been picking moths, that have been attracted by the light, off a window at Fryerstown. (CN) Another tawny frogmouth was seen at Barkers Creek on the evening of June 21st. It flew from a native garden to perch on an iron railing at the edge of the verandah. Its attempt to resemble a dead branch was little use on such a perch. (EP) Both sightings make new locality records.

WHITE-WINGED CHOUGHS. Large flocks have been seen between Maldon and Bendigo. It seems that these birds are becoming more common. (BW)

LAPWINGS. Approximately 30 lapwings were seen along the dam wall in Ottrey's Scrub Road on 14/6/91. (EP)

PURPLE-CROWNED LORIKEETS. Flocks have been seen at Cairn Curran (IP) and at Tarrangower (SS). Both are new locality records.

SILVEREYES have been seen bathing under a sprinkler in Hunter Street (RH)

MISTLETOE BIRDS have been in a Campbell St garden (KT)

PLANTS IN FLOWER include cranberry heath, spreading wattle and silky hakea. Large areas of the hakea are in flower between the new gaol and the china house.

CATTLE EGRETS AT GISBORNE. Egrets were noticed in the company of cows, in a paddock near the start of the Gisborne bypass on June 29th.

PEACEFUL DOVES AT MALDON. A flock of 16 birds was seen on June 27th at the North British Mine at Maldon. Flocks of this size were seen on a Club excursion to Tarrangower a few years ago. (EP)

STARLINGS have been eating persimmons in Campbell St. (KT)

LITTLE FALCON at Wheeler Street was seen to be joined by another little falcon. The pair flew off together. (GB)

FUNGI have been reported to be scarce in the forest so far this year. (GB)

BANDED SILVEREYES

Please keep a lookout for banded silvereyes. Please note too the colour of the bands. Information should be sent to Dr T Burton of Bendigo CAE.

BOOBOOKS AT FRYERSTOWN

The sighting of a pair of boobook owls during lunchtime on the excursion to Fryerstown was one of the highlights of the excursion to Fryerstown with the Bendigo F.N.C. members. The pair were perched on a peppercorn, close to the picnic table next to Fryer's Creek, near the centre of the town. Their choice of a peppercorn tree as a roosting spot is interesting, as this is the same kind of tree used by the boobook in Campbell Street.

Other interesting sightings were of a pair of speckled warblers at the Fryerstown sportsground, and a hardhead on the large dam near Bald Hill (at Fryerstown).

At Chewton, near the oval, a pair of black-shouldered kites was observed, as they flew overhead, apparently in combat (or was it a mating activity?)

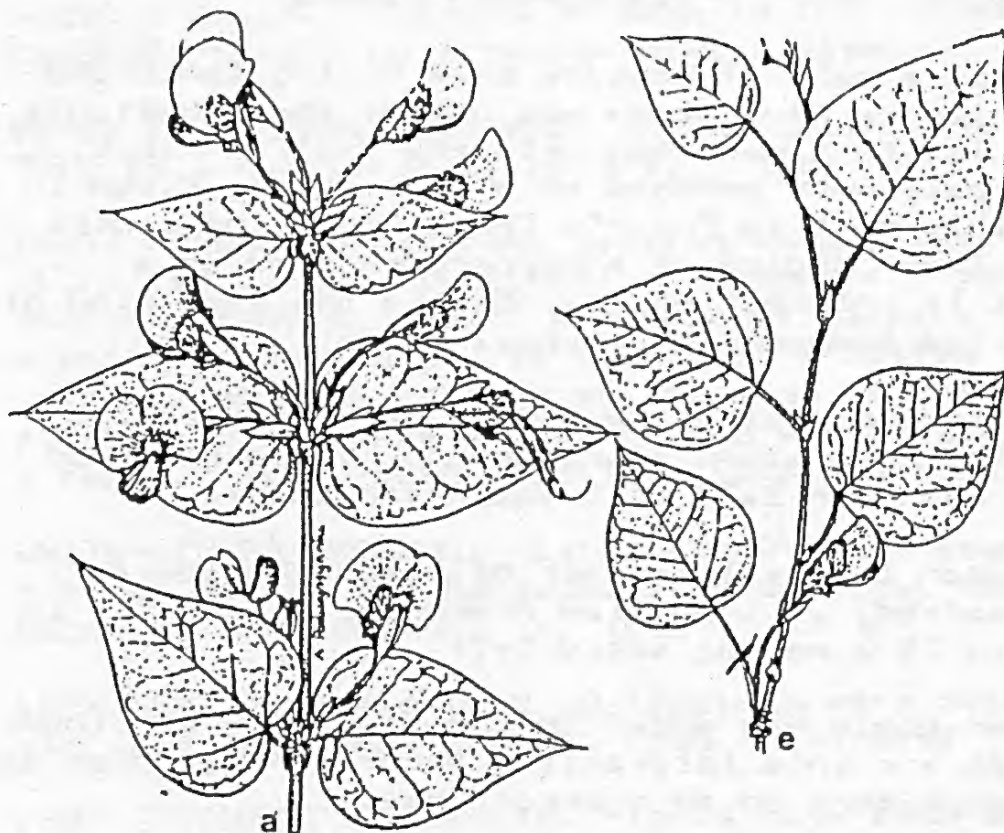
A wedge-tailed eagle was added to the list at Fryerstown. The total list for this interesting excursion was over 40 birds - a good effort on an overcast day.

Grebe, Australian	Wren, Superb Blue
Cormorant, Little Pied	Scrub-wren, White-browed
Duck, Pacific Black	Warbler, Speckled
Hardhead	Weebill
Duck, Maned	Thornbill, Brown
Eagle, Wedge-tailed	Thornbill, Buff-tailed
Kite, Black-shouldered	Treecreeper White-throated
Moorhen, Dusky	Wattlebird, Red
Coot	Honeyeater, White-eared
Lapwing, Masked	Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted
Galah	Honeyeater, Yellow-faced
Rosella, Crimson	Honeyeater, Fuscous
Rosella, Eastern	Honeyeater, White-naped
Boobook, Southern	Pardalote, Striated
Kookaburra	Silver Eye
Blackbird	Firetail, Red-browed
Robin, Scarlet	Magpie
Robin, Yellow	Currawong, Grey
Winter, Jacky	Raven, Australian
Shrike-thrush, Grey	Raven, Little
Wagtail, Willy	

Black-shouldered kite, wedge-tailed eagle, masked lapwing, galah, boobook, speckled warbler, weebill, silvereye and little raven are all new locality records.

THE ALTERNATE-LEAVED FLAT-PEA

The handsome flat-pea is common south of Castlemaine. It has leaves that are stalkless and in opposite pairs. The name describes the plant well. The flowers are handsome indeed - they are a large egg-and-bacon pea-flower. The usual form of the plant is semi-erect with large (several centimetre) heart-shaped leaves.



P. formosum

In an area north of Mt Franklin, and on the eastern side of the Fryers Ridge Road, the form of the flat-pea is quite different, being quite prostrate. Often the plant is very large, and many patches have a diameter of 15 to 20 metres. The leaf arrangement is also different. The leaves have long (several centimetre) stalks which grow singly along the stem.

If the identity of this alternate-leaved form is ascertained using Willis, the key indicates that it is the Victorian flat-pea, *Platylobium alternifolia*.

Willis gives its occurrence as "rare trailer of the central and western hills, where endemic", with grids D, J and N (e.g Grampians to Mt Macedon). Galbraith gives its occurrence as Grampians. Beauglehole gives records for Blackwood and Mt Disappointment, Mt Bolangum, Mt Cole and Mt Buangor. Gullan et al, on the other hand, gives its occurrence as restricted to the Grampians, with a possible former occurrence at Mt Cole, and list it as a rare and endangered species.

A solution to this confusing state of affairs is provided by the revision of the *platylobium* genus made in 1983. In the revision, the major difference between the handsome flat pea and the Victorian flat-pea is the hairiness of the calyx. The handsome flat-pea may have either opposite or alternate leaves.

In his key, the species are separated

1. Leaves alternate; calyx glabrous externally except for a conspicuous fringe of hairs on the margins of the lobesP. alternifolia
2. Leaves opposite, very infrequently some leaves alternate but then the calyx clothed externally with spreading or appressed hairs throughout P.formosum

This is the wrong time of the year to examine the hairiness or otherwise of the calyces, but it seems that all of the populations of flat-pea in the district are forms of the handsome flat-pea. When the plants are examined closely, it is usual to find at least a few of the leaves to be opposite, and almost stalkless. And there is a more or less gradual change from the semi-erect specimens along Fryer's Ridge Road to the prostrate specimens near Belltopper Hill. It seems likely that the Victorian flat-pea is confined to the Grampians. Galbraith actually calls it the Grampians flat-pea. It would seem that other records refer to the alternate-leaved form of Handsome flat-pea.

References

- J.H. Ross "A revision of the Genus *Platylobium* Sm. (Papilionacea). *Muellerana* 5(2): 127-141 (1983) [from which the illustrations are taken]
- A.C. Beauglehole. The distribution and Conservation of Vascular Plants in Victoria. [various study areas]
- J. H. Willis "A Handbook to Plants in Victoria" Vol 2
- J. Galbraith. "Collins Field Guide to the Wildflowers of South-East Australia". Collins 1977.
- P.K. Gullan, D.C. Cheal and N.G. Walsh "Rare or threatened Plants in Victoria" Department of Conservation and Environment, Victoria May 1990.

 Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc
 P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine 3450

Committee: Ern Perkins (Pres), Chris Norwood (VP), Rita Mills (Newsletter), Maggie Oliver (VP), Barbara Maund (Sec), Clodagh Norwood (Treas), Kaye Turner, George Broadway, Enid Hall, Brenda Envall and Beris Perry.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Student/Pensioner	\$7	Single	\$10
Supporting	\$20	Family	\$15
Newsletter posted: Subscription plus \$6			

SUPPER Jun 14 R Mills & M Oliver July 12 G & P Broadway

Visitors are invited to attend the Club's sessions.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Fri 12 July. THE HIMALAYAS with Beris Perry. 8.00 p.m. at the High School.

Sat 13 July. CENTRAL SPRINGS. A walk to Central Springs from Vaughan. Bring your binoculars and a bird book. Meet 1.30 at SEC, Mostyn St or 1.45 at Vaughan Springs.

Sun 28 Jul. BLACK HILL. Bird Observer Club excursion to Black Hill. Leader is Pat Bingham. Meet at Black Hill, at 10.00 a.m. or 38 Campbell St at 9.15 a.m. "Gentle strolls around the periphery and/or more energetic inter-boulder scrambles 'over the top' in open peppermint-stringybark forest."

Fri 9 Aug. Jane Calder. To be confirmed.

Sat 10 Aug. GUILDFORD AREA. Leader is Beris perry. Meet SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30 p.m. or Guildford P.O. at 1.45.

Fri 30 Aug - Sun 1 Sept. HATTAH. WVFNCA campout organised by Sunraysia Club

Tues 3 Sept-Fri 6 Sept. CAPE BROOM WEED PULL at Botanic Gardens with Australian Trust for Volunteers.

Fri 13 Sept. BRITISH ISLES REVISITED. Nicolette Hooper

Sat 14 Sept. THE MONK/SPRING GULLY. 1.30 at SEC.

4-6th Oct. CAPE BRIDGEWATER. WVFNCA campout organised by Portland CFNC.

Sun 6 Oct. MUCKLEFORD FOREST with Ballarat F.N.C.

Fri 11 Oct. NOCTURNAL with Rob Watkins.

Sat 12 Oct. LAURISTON WILDFLOWERS. 1.30 p.m. at SEC.

Fri 8 Nov. Pat Bingham

Sun 20 Oct. MALDON STEAM TRAIN WILDFLOWER TRIP. Date of Bendigo Native Plant Group outing. 1 p.m. at Maldon RS. Later trains at 2,3 and 4 p.m. so choice of several for return. Cost \$4 adults, \$2 children

Sat 9 Nov. TIPPERARY SPRINGS. Walk from the springs to Twin Bridges. Leader R. Mills. 1.30 pm at SEC, Mostyn Street. Leader R. Mills.

Meetings on the second Friday of each month (Jan excepted) at Castlemaine High School at 8.00 p.m. Business meetings on the fourth Thursday at 38 Campbell St at 7.30 p.m. All members are invited to attend.